

## **Addendum 3**

### **Family Unification Program (FUP)**

## **FAMILY UNIFICATION PROGRAM**

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Family Unification Program was enacted by Congress in 1990 to help prevent the unnecessary separation of children from their families due to homelessness and housing problems. The program responded to growing concerns about the impact of housing problems on family stability and built upon efforts already in place in several states, including California. The program provides housing assistance through Section 8 Rental Assistance to families who meet the regular Section 8 eligibility criteria is certified and referred when the public child welfare agency. A family who meets Family Unification eligibility criteria and are certified and referred by the lack of adequate housing is a primary factor (1) in the imminent placement of the family's child or children in out-of-home care, or (2) in the delay of discharge of a child or children to the family from out-of-home care.

### **COORDINATION BETWEEN THE OCHA AND THE SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY (SSA) TO IDENTIFY AND ASSIST ELIGIBLE FAMILIES**

Since January 1, 1991, the Orange County Housing Authority (OCHA) and the County of Orange Social Services Agency (SSA) have successfully collaborated in implementing the OCHA's Operation Bootstrap Program and the Family Self-Sufficiency Program. A Memorandum of Procedure (MOP) between SSA and OCHA provided the necessary framework for successful coordination of services to program participants. A MOP describes the coordination responsibilities between the OCHA and the SSA to implement the Family Unification Program.

It should be noted that the SSA simultaneously is coordinating the Family Unification Program with the Anaheim and Santa Ana Housing Authorities, as well as the OCHA. Therefore, all three public housing authorities (PHAs) have cooperated with the SSA to develop a consistent approach in implementing the Family Unification Program in Orange County, California.

### **FAMILY PARTICIPATION**

The families selected for participation in the Family Unification Program must be eligible for assistance under the OCHA's Section 8 Rental Assistance program and must meet Family Unification eligibility criteria as certified by the SSA.

A Family Unification eligible family which does not have any of their child(ren) in the household at the time of Voucher issuance and/or leasing, may be issued rental assistance and may receive assistance under the appropriate bedroom size determined by including the child(ren) who are expected to return to the household. Emancipated youth may also qualify in accordance with HUD regulations.

Under the Family Unification Program, the OCHA will allow single individual occupancy until child(ren) are returned to the household, as long as the SSA certifies Family Unification eligibility. The SSA will verify that the family is still eligible at the time of issuing the rental assistance.

A Family Unification eligible family, which has some, but not all of their children in the household, may be issued rental assistance and may receive assistance under the appropriate bedroom size determined by including the children who are expected to return to the household.

Once the family is leased, the OCHA will conduct recertifications on a six-month schedule or yearly basis to monitor the Family Unification progress and eligibility. If a family does not reunify within a 6 month period after leasing, the OCHA will consult with the SSA to obtain a recommendation on whether the family should receive a different bedroom size allocation under the Family Unification Program, or be terminated.

## **TERMINATIONS**

The Orange County Housing Authority may terminate assistance from the Family Unification Program for reasons that may include:

- The case plan has changed, and re-unification of the family will not occur within a reasonable period of time, as verified by the assigned social worker.
- The Juvenile Court orders termination of re-unification services and an alternate permanent plan is made for the child(ren).
- The children are removed from the assisted unit for any reason and/or their custody is awarded to other relatives or individuals.
- Other program abuses and/or non-performance of regular Section 8 duties or family obligations.

If the decision to terminate is made, the OCHA will provide a minimum of 30 days written notice to the client and to the SSA Family Unification Program Liaison. The family has the right to request an Informal Hearing to review this action.

Note: Families that are referred for participation may have drug and/or criminal related backgrounds prior to court reunification services. This will not preclude them from participation under normal criminal activity limitations.

